

Mirror entertainment

Once upon a time parks were near

(Editor's note: The following story includes excerpts from the Feb. 17, 1982, issue of *Northeastern Pennsylvania*, published by Sheffield Publications, Inc., Box 161, Carbondale, Pa., 18407-0161.)

The major corporation theme parks have taken over today's leisure time for youngsters and adults.

These larger parks are few and far between, making long automobile trips necessary in most cases.

But years ago, amusement parks were but a short car or train trip away.

There were several notable ones in the immediate area, including Lake Ladore Park, Newton Lake Park and Farview.

Lake Ladore Park

According to *Northeastern Pennsylvania*, Lake Ladore Park:

"This park was located on the shores of the largest of the 80 lakes in Wayne County. Little is known about this park except that it had a free-standing dance pavilion, merry-go-round, baseball field, and a shoot-the-chutes at the lake.

"Transportation to the park was provided by the Delaware and Hudson Railroad, which carried thousands of people there on excursion trains.

"The park ceased operating about 1915. After the park closed, the carousel was sold to Newton Lake Park. This park later became Camp With-a-Wind. In 1967, at a price of \$700,000, the Salvation Army purchased this park. The pavilion and merry-go-round concrete slab are still being used today."

Newton Lake Park

Northeastern Pennsylvania also gave a short history of Newton Lake Park, located in Greenfield Township near Carbondale.

"This park was one of the few parks in northeastern Pennsylvania that was not built on a trolley line. It was built and owned by Frank Bernhardt Wagner, and opened for the 1917 season. To get people to visit the 50.5 acre park, good roads and electric lines had to be installed.

"Rides included a mini railroad, whip, carousel, heyday, dodgem, ferris wheel, roller coaster, boat ride, three kiddie rides and a 50-passenger show boat on Newton Lake itself. The ferris wheel carried the serial number 003. The roller coaster was built by a Mr. Neary in 1924. It had a 6-inch wide and 4-inch high "T" iron rail in the center. This is what held the cars on the track. To get the cars off the track, part of the track would have to be taken off.

"The lift hill was powered by a one-cylinder diesel engine that could have been patented. The carousel was built in 1881 in Austria. It contained forty-eight figures that were handcarved, making it one of only three of its kind in the world. This beautiful carousel originally was located in Lake Ladore Park.

"This park, later managed by Frank Wagner's son, Franklin E. Wagner, was the scene of the "Miss Anthracite" beauty contest, Sunday School picnics and other group outings. Assisting Franklin E. Wagner in the management of the park was Paul (Doc) Stenson.

"The 80' X 90' dance hall was built in 1919, with bridge-type joists. It was remodeled in

1924 with a 6-foot promenade added. In 1953, a new floor was installed. In the early days of the park, big bands played there. The dance hall was the last structure in use when the park ceased operation in the 1970s.

"Newton Lake Park bottled its own soda and manufactured its own ice cream. The park advertised frequently in Scranton newspapers. Following one Fourth of July celebration, the management, in a newspaper ad, thanked the 75,000 people who spent Sunday and July 4th at 'Lackawanna County's Lake Resort. All Previous Records Were Shattered Once Again.'

"In 19--, a man riding the roller coaster at Newton Lake Park unlocked the chain and stood up in the moving car. He lost his life. In 1952, the coaster, which was damaged by Hurricane Hazel, was closed because it did not comply with safety requirements. It did not, for example, have a catwalk all along the track.

"Anna E. Wagner, the daughter of Frank Bernhardt Wagner, operated the park for a time, before leasing it to several people. On November 17, 1976, the park was sold by Miss Wagner to Newton Lake Estates, Inc., for \$75,000. The new owners tried to run the park for the 1977 season, but had bigger plans on their minds.

"Thomas J. Kenney, of Finch Hill, the former operator and new owner of the park, announced on June 10, 1977 that the park was no longer open to the public. All of the amusement buildings were demolished and all of the rides were sold. The carousel did manage to find a new home at Marriott's Great Adventure in Santa Clara (Riverside), California.

"As for the land, Mr. Kenney had visions of creating a \$16 million development, to include town houses, a theatre-in-the-round, jai lai fronton and a greyhound track, if permission was granted by the state legislature. Future plans called for a hotel and a heliport. In a newspaper interview, Mr. Kenney was asked why he was interested in doing what he was planning on doing at Newton Lake.

"He replied: 'For the first time in my 50 years, Lackawanna County is witnessing a steady increase in population growth and significant expansion in building activities.' His projects for Newton Lake Park, unfortunately, never materialized. If they had, between 1,500 and 2,000 new jobs would have been created."

Farview Park

Farview Park was the scene of much activity in the 20th century.

According to *Northeastern Pennsylvania*: "When passenger service on the Gravity Railroad between Carbondale and Honesdale was inaugurated in 1859, Farview Park, a stop along the route of the Gravity Railroad, very quickly became a popular tourist attraction. Thousands of passengers took the Gravity Railroad to Farview where, from atop the Moosic Mountain, they picked and enjoyed the scenery."

Crystal Lake

Crystal Lake near Carbondale also once enjoyed an amusement of sorts years ago... Crystal Lake once had, as did Lake Ladore and Newton Lake, a steamer.